

A. W. MOORE



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MANX BALLADS AND MUSIC
(1896)

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THE REVIEWS



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A.W. MOORE
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(1896)



A CHECKLIST OF THE REVIEWS OF MANX BALLADS AND MUSIC (1896)

1. "Manx Ballads and Music," *Isle of Man Examiner* 9 January 1897: 3d. [Review appears that same day as "Manx Ballads and Music," *Ramsey Weekly News* 9 January 1897: 3d.]
2. "Manx Ballads and Music," *The Manxman* 9 January 1897: 2–3a.
3. Unsigned [later reply signed as "The Writer of the Review"]. "MANX SONGS WITH ENGLISH WORDS, selected from the M.S. collection of the Deemster Gill, Dr. J. Clague, and W.H. Gill, and arranged by W.H. Gill, (London: Boosey and Co., 1896.) MANX BALLADS AND MUSIC, Edited by A.W. Moore, M.A., with a Preface by the Rev. T.E. Brown, M.A. (Douglas: G. and B. Johnson, 1896)." *Manx Sun* 16 January 1897: 8e–g.
4. "Manx Ballads and Music," *Isle of Man Times* 23 February 1897: 4c. [Review reprinted as "Manx Ballads and Music," *Isle of Man Times* 9 March 1897: 2g.]
5. "Manx Ballads & Music: Edited by A.W. Moore, M.A.; Printed and Published by G. and R. Johnson, Prospect-hill, Douglas, Isle of Man," *Mona's Herald* 24 March 1897: 4c–d.

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§I ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (9 JANUARY 1897)

[3d] There has just been issued, the printers and publishers being Messrs G. and R. Johnson, of Prospect-hill, Douglas, "Manx Ballads and Music," edited by A.W. Moore, M.A., with a preface by the Rev. T.E. Brown, M.A. The book has been a long time in the Press, but it is a volume decidedly worth the waiting for. The collection of ballads is most interesting, and the editing of the work gives evidence throughout of care and scholarly ability. Many of the ballads included in the work now see print for the first time, and the same can be said of more than one of the tunes. Truth to tell, the ballads reveal that Manx people of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to which period most of the ballads belong, were almost if not entirely devoid of the poetic spirit. The Rev. T.E. Brown, in his preface, puts the matter pithily thus: "As regards the words and music of the Manx songs, one is constantly startled by their disparity. Many of the tunes seem fitted, if not intended, to express emotions which find no utterance in the words. And the question occurs—are these the original words? In the case of the best known among the tunes.

Mylecharaine, the subject of the song is of a very prosaic kind. A dowry, for the first time in the Isle of Man, is given to a daughter, and is condemned by the lieges as of evil precedent. But the tune suggests a depth of ineffable melancholy. In Kirree fo Niaghtey we have a tune, I should imagine, less trimmed to modern associations, a very noble, rugged product of conditions which it is hard to realise, even though we were to admit that a great snowfall and the rescue of the buried flocks may possibly have occasioned the vehement and irregular outburst.... We cannot resist the conviction that these great old tunes have lost their partners in life, that both tunes and words were the outcome of a primitive age. For some reason or other the words were the outcome of a primitive age. For some reason or other the words were forgotten, and the tunes in their widowhood, descended to the embrace of churls and varlets, or continued to exist in single blessedness, and became those ‘Sings without words,’ which serve as the basis of popular dance music.” Of course, it must be admitted that it is impossible to convey a proper idea of poetry in a literal translation, but making every allowance for this, the word “silly” best describes most of the songs contained in the collection. Here is a specimen, taken at random—and not an extreme specimen—of a Manx “ballad” entitled “Yn dooinney boght” (“The poor man”) as translated:

The poor man was digging,
 The poor man was digging,
 The poor man was digging,
 To and fro, to and fro;
 And his spade on his shoulder,
 And his spade on his shoulder,
 And his spade on his shoulder,
 To and fro, to and fro.

The poor man was digging,
 The poor man was digging,
 The poor man was digging,
 To and fro, to and fro;
 And he caught the black crow,
 And he caught the black crow,
 And he caught the black crow,
 To and fro, to and fro.

As a rule the ballads, looked at as poetry, are as bad as they possibly could be, but there are exceptions—notably the noble fragment Fin as Oshin, which makes one long for more, and the songs of Archdeacon Rutter. Both Mr Brown in the preface, and Mr A.W. Moore in the introduction, go out of their way to apologise of the fewness of Manx ballads, and to ingeniously explain why there are not more of them. But surely 73 songs is a pretty decent allowance for a community that un number, at

the period of the ballads, would not exceed 10,000. It is very doubtful whether England, Ireland, or Scotland can show a proportionately larger survival of the national songs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The preface and introduction are in themselves that gentlemen so eminently capable go their respective tasks as are Mr Brown and Mr Moore should have undertaken these interesting sections of the volume under notice. The book is admirably printed, and is assuredly deserving of a binding worthy of the typography.

§2 THE MANXMAN (9 JANUARY 1897)

[2a] We have received a copy of *Manx Ballads and Music*, edited by A.W. Moore, M.A. It is a great pity that there should be two Richmonds in the field; for the sake of that amplitude which invariably results from collation and collaboration, it would have been infinitely better if Mr Moore had joined forces with the compilers of *Manx National Songs*, so that the melodies (if there be any) which he has netted, and which eluded the search of Mr and Deemster Gill and Dr Clague, might have been included in their volume. Mr Moore seems to have had the bulk of the work done for him by other hands. He has written a preface, which, though in no way very recondite, is somewhat interesting, and has lent the collection the endorsement of his name. The translations from the Manx are, we would remark, painfully literal, and not always in correct English, and we think that Mr Moore might have devoted some of his time and undoubted ability to touching them up; if he could not bestow upon them the poetic dress of the originals, at least he could have softened their naked angularities. This is the sort of literature one is introduced to in Mr Moore's book:

[2b]

Listen to me my friends, and I
 Will strive to tell to you,
 Of a young pair that courting went,
 In an unheard of style.

The best thing in the book from a literary standpoint is "Eubonia Bright," as translated by Archbishop Rutter, and we can only feel sorry, on perusing it, that the jolly old ecclesiastic had not tried his hand on all the other Manx songs of the time. The Archdeacon's translation of the song is as follows:

See, see the sun that rules the night,
 Not made to hurt but help the sight;
 The envy of the proudest vine
 Fixed in an orb pure crystalline
 Sing we loud Eubonia's praise,
 Eubonia bright, whose sparkling rays
 Break through the clouds of troubled souls,
 And leave no care but in the bowls.

while Mr Moore offers us the following sterile and useless version:

See, see the sun that rules the night,
 For light to them that cheerful sit;
 The proudest vine is envious
 About this being counted best.

Ye Manxman sing with me the praise
 Of the good strong ale and the malt;
 For every trouble, ev'ry care
 Goes away with the barley bree

We can forgive the Archdeacon any slight errors in his Manx or in his conception of the intention of the original. He has, at least, given us something definite and complete, with a beginning, an end, and an inside; which is more than can be said of anything else in this book.

In his introduction Mr Moore says that many songs of an erotic character had been passed over as unfit for publication. This reminds us of the old lady who, in company with several young ones at an Art Gallery, remarked audibly, while the group were examining a study in the nude, that it was improper. In her case it was not the picture, but the remark that was indiscreet. Mr Moore might have printed the Manx, and have given us a translation which would have been readable if not absolutely true. At any rate, it would have been better to have made no reference to the disgraced ones at all, because there are one or two things in this book—as, for example, in the tale of the “Shepherd’s Daughter”—which are sufficiently indecent to cause us to wonder what the others must have been like. We must only conclude that the vocal tastes of our forefathers must have been atrociously corrupt indeed. Some of the melodies would have received their just dessert if they had been permitted to slide into that oblivion which threatened them. They are utterly unworthy of perpetuation, being simply so much doggerel music, most of them being absolutely void of form, and conforming to no rules of rhythm. We rather fancy the musical portion of the work has been left in the hands of persons who had not sufficient courage or experience to do it justice. Like the translations, the airs are bald, and given with their native errors thick upon them. They have been taken down from the lips of the illiterate, whose memories may have been much at fault; and the compilers do not seem to have had the ingenuity nor the experience requisite for arriving at the whole from the evidence of a part. An average English student taking up this book must conclude that the Manx were not only ribald, but distinctly and irreclaimably unmusical. It is a matter of regret, therefore, that more time and greater skill had not been devoted to the work. Several of the airs given here as [3a] of Manx origin would, in that case, have been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Such, for instance, would have been the fate of “A Lullaby,” which appears to be “Jenny Jones” masquerading on Manx soil, and “Sweet Water in the Common,” which is a cross between “The Cruise of the Calabar” (which has always

had a wonderful popularity in the island) and "The Farmer's Daughter," one of the oldest ballads extant. Who does not remember it?

It's of a farmer's daughter, so beautiful I'm told,
Her parents died and left her five hundred pounds in gold;
She lived with her uncle, the cause of all her woe,
As you soon shall hear, this maiden fair did prove his overthrow.

Her uncle had a ploughboy young Mary loved full well,
And in her uncle's garden their tales of love would tell;
But there was a wealthy squire who oft came her to see,
Yet still she loved her plough boy on the banks of sweet Dundee.

Then again Mr Moore's "Hunt the Wren" is entirely wrong, and must have been taken down from some obfuscated musician, who mixed it up with the well-known jig, once popular in the island, "The Irish Washerwoman." The "Voyage of the Tiger" has only half a melody to it, and Mr Moore will find that he has given it the same air he has assigned to the latter half of his "Farmer's Daughter," imply altering the third bar from the end, with a view to introducing a new series of harmonics by the arrangers. The Rev Mr T.E. Brown's introduction is good, and eminently readable, as everything from Mr Brown's pen is. The harmonics of Miss Wood and Miss McKnight are fair, though hackneyed, and are obviously hampered by the eccentricities of the melodies. Mr Nicholson has embellished the work here and there with some hazy suggestions of genius, in the shape of some ethereal and shadowy sketches of a very "tired" type, which seem to say "I could and I would," but they never do while the printing has been exceedingly well done by Messrs G. & R. Johnson, of Prospect Hill.

§3 MANX SUN (16 JANUARY 1897)

MANX SONGS WITH ENGLISH WORDS, selected from the M.S. collection of the DEEMSTER GILL, DR. J. CLAGUE, and W.H. GILL, and arranged by W.H. GILL, (London: Boosey and Co., 1896.)

MANX BALLADS AND MUSIC, Edited by A.W. MOORE, M.A., with a Preface by the Rev T.E. BROWN, M.A. (Douglas: G. and B. Johnson, 1896.)

[8e] Few greater pleasures are the lot of the reviewer than the reviewing of a really good work—a book interesting in its subject and workmanlike in its style. We have no hesitation whatever in declaring that both these requirements are abundantly fulfilled in one of the two volumes before us. That such is not the case in both instances is entirely due to the sadly mistaken views on "collecting" held by the compilers, who are not, unfortunately, content with giving to the world the fruits, pure and simple, of their industry, gleaned no doubt with painstaking intelligence.

With long experience we can safely add we have never previously met with a more painful instance of the art of the “improver,” than is displayed in the first of these two books, the very title of which is utterly misleading. Sad to relate, nothing is sacred to the modern reformer. He will as readily re-trim and “adapt” an old ballad as he will pull down, in order to “renovate” the ancient parish steeple. It is a pitiful fact that the hand of Iconoclast is ever hovering near, and like a destroying angel, withers all he touches. A more forcible example of this has probably never been afforded than in the first of these two books, edited by the Messrs Gill, from whom Manx people have a right to expect better things. In the case of both books the editors set out with an exactly similar object, namely to collect the old Folk-songs of their fathers. They do this with the avowed object of gathering these fragments from a dying past and handing them on to future generations; truly a laudable object and all honour to those who will honestly and faithfully do such work. There is no higher business for man than to make his fellow men happy and the happiness and joy of peoples are to be found best expressed in their national ballads; the joys and sorrows, the loves and games, the defeats and triumphs, these are the real life of every nation and by no people on earth are these characteristics exhibited in stronger degree than by the sons and daughters of Ellan Vannin. In the case of the Messrs Gill they have utterly and ignominiously failed to attend to the elementary rules which should be observed by collectors and this failure compels us, with pain, to condemn their book as a thoroughly unsatisfactory, meretricious publication and an unnecessary interference with a subject we wish the authors had not touched, or touched not with sacrilegious hands.

That this criticism is neither unfair nor unwarranted the most cursory examination of Messrs Gill’s book will prove to demonstration. In the preface the book is stated to be “the first practical outcome” of a project “to collect and preserve from oblivion [...] the national music of the Isle of Man.” Let us for a moment examine this very extraordinary “first practical outcome.” The compilers inform us, and we know the statement to be substantially true, that a few old people retain the words and tunes of an ancient Manx music but that they are somewhat reluctant to sing the songs of their forefathers lest they should be received by the rising generation with a lack of proper reverence. We devoutly wish the “old people” had effectually shown this reluctance when visited by the Messrs Gill for they truly inform us further as the results of their collection that “the songs in this volume are given as showing one form into which the originals maybe developed.” It is further stated again that for various reasons the Manx words of the songs are not given, one of these reasons being that “many are unfit for publication.” A tolerably extensive knowledge of the subject compels us to revolt against this statement for with the exception of some half-dozen or so ribald rhymes, which under no circumstances could be called “Manx Songs” there is not a word of truth in it. “For various reasons” (we are again quoting from the book) “the English words are in no sense translations

[...] have no connection with the original themes.” Verily a strange collection of “Manx Songs.” Instead of giving a translation of the well-known words to the air “Ny Kirree fo Niaghtey” a new set, not nearly so pretty as the translation of the original afforded, is supplied, and is stated to be written by W.H. Gill, who has also written words “suggested” by the original Manx ballad of “Mylecharaine,” a name which is not even correctly spelled. We are not told whether the originals are “unfit for publication” as so many others are said to be. We have many instances in the book of this busy meddling and peddling “improving” spirit. Thus we have no less than nine or ten of the “songs” in this book of “Manx National Songs” written by Mr Gill, and they can all, without injustice, be safely classed as of the most mediocre, wishy-washy description. We have not the smallest objection to Mr Gill or anyone else writing songs—if they are songs—but we have a very decided objection to parting with money for a book of “Manx Songs” which are neither Manx, National, nor yet songs. Again, song writers of fame, some of whom never saw the Isle of Man, are dragged in to do duty in this book, such for instance as James Hogg, the “Ettrick Shepherd[,]” Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott, Tom Hood, even the venerable and worthy Dr Watts of “busy bee” fame. Verily the Messrs Gill and Clague are anxious to stand in great company. The result of this mixture of things Manx and things not Manx that we have the finest hodgepodge imaginable, and this combined, with the amount of stirring the mixture has had would do credit to a concocter of Christmas pudding. Scotch ballads, such as “When Maggy gangs awa,” and English religious poetry, as “Hush! my dear, lie still and slumber,” are jumbled side by side with newly manufactured verses for “Mylecharaine” and “Illiam Dhone,” and to crown their egotism the compilers have labelled the book, in all the glory of gold letters, “Manx National Songs.” Room is found for songs of other nations, but a truly Manx piece such as “Hop-tu-naa” is denied admission altogether. Surely the propriety of things was never more grossly outraged. Messrs Gill and Clague may, without objection, collect and publish their own effusions, weak and ineffective as in this book they show themselves, but in dealing with the heritage of ballads, which have come down to our age, we have a right to protest against mutilation and against inclusion of new “songs” with what is old and genuine.

The compilers have treated the music not less unmercifully than the words. An examination of many of the scores will convince any Manx singer or instrumentalist that these are not the tunes he has known and loved. For proof of this let any reader try the well known air of “Mylecharaine” or “Ny Kirree fo Niaghtey.” The collections in the volumes of the “Manx Society” and the “Mona Melodist” are known to be incorrect, but it is evident in the case of those volumes that the editors of the music did their best, however mistakenly, in their day and generation. They at any rate did not wilfully alter by endeavouring to “improve.” Except in one or two instances, and with these exceptions the renderings as there given are infinitely more true than is the case with the book under notice. According to Messrs Gill they have

succeeded in gathering no fewer than two hundred and sixty local melodies, a sufficiently alarming statement to any faithful student of the subject. But we have no hesitation in declaring our belief that the greater portion of them would be found to have no possible connection with the Isle of Man. We cannot but think Mr Moore comes nearer the truth when he says "Careful inquiries have been made in every parish in the island with reference to those acquainted with old tunes" and yet the result of those inquiries is that he can publish only some forty-five tunes. If the number of known carol airs, etc., be added to these it will at once be found Messrs Gill's statement of "two hundred and sixty local melodies" is an obvious exaggeration. Fortunately their book contains only some fifty airs, and as many of these have been so "transposed" and "improved" and "adapted" we are thankful there are no more of them.

We have no desire to write a single harsh word respecting the work of any one anxious to preserve memorials of the old Manx life, but we must seem express our regret that the Messrs Gill and Clague have taken a business for which they appear to be no way qualified. They promise a "largely extended selection of the melodies for the pianoforte," but unless the work is more carefully done, and with an absence of the "restoring and improving" spirit, we would be glad if it could be transferred to more competent hands to perform. Such books as the one before us may serve, in the absence of better, to pass an hour in English drawing-rooms, where Manx songs are not known, but let the aim of the compilers of such be clearly stated so that [8f] Manx people may assiduously avoid books they do not want.

In the second of the two books named at the head of our list we have a work of a very different character. The fruit of Mr Moore's labour is worthy of all praise. This is a real Manx book—Manx in subject and in treatment, in illustration and in printing—it is a credit to all concerned in its production. By fidelity to the ancient Manx words of the ballads, by careful translation of these, and by the carefully transcribed music, the book is, and is likely to remain, the most generally interesting book that has been published concerning the island. Every person who is at all interested in the island or in music should hasten to secure a copy or this valuable work, and we can promise pleasure of a very high order will be derived from the perusal of it. We believe Mr Moore has gathered up for the pleasure and profit of generations of Manxmen yet unborn all that is now ever likely to be gleaned of the ballads, and their music, of the Isle of Man. We confess to a feeling no less of surprise than of pleasure in handling the book. By great industry the collection has been so carefully made that probably nothing in the nature of a song or ballad has escaped notice, and, as a consequence, we have here no less than seventy four distinctly Manx pieces. These are classed in various sections as mythical, semi-historical and historical, children's songs, customs and superstitions, love songs, patriotic ballads, nautical ballads, and an unclassifiable miscellaneous. Under each of these headings we have, with the utmost accuracy so far attainable, the original Manx

of each ballad and on the opposite page a literal translation without any attempt at English rhyme or metre. Had this been done the effect would have been to spoil the primitive simplicity of the songs. It could not, while retaining the full sense of the original, be made into good English metre, and it would certainly ruin the telling effect of the original Manx. It is much to be thankful for that while Mr Moore has removed, and rightly so, obvious corruptions, and has restored the original completeness he is not a "restorer" anxious to work in something of his own creation: something which never before belonged to the ballads.

With the exception of a few written by jolly Bishop Rutter, who, fittingly, lived in the early days of the Merry Monarch, Charles II, the words of most of these songs have come down to us only from the latter portion of the eighteenth century. We have little doubt that the horribly severe Church discipline of Bishops Barrow, Wilson, and Hildesley allowed by the Methodist revival, covering altogether a period of close upon two hundred years, did much, if not everything to stifle the naturally lively sentiment and tendency to occasional innocent enjoyment found in all Celtic people. No doubt during this disciplinary period much of the early ballad poetry died from pure neglect, combined with clerical intolerance; and we cannot doubt that by these occurrences, together with the almost total lack of education among the people, the store of musical enjoyment has been materially reduced.

As might be anticipated from a northern people, the songs are rugged in their simplicity. They have not the linked sweetness long drawn out such as is commonly found in the poetry of southern climes. They contain little of the passionate, but much of the homely. This is especially the case with the love songs where prudential considerations are often as well attended to as the billing and cooing side of an engagement; and, happily, this characteristic is not absent in these days. "Don't marry for money, but go where money is." Love ill supplies the place of bread and cheese. The section of love songs, however, contains much innocent humour, and is one of the most interesting portions of the book. As a sample of original and translation we select a verse or two from "Arrane Sooree," a "courting song":

Dooiney-Aeg:

Graa: my graih as my garjagh,
Nish lhiggys oo me stiagh,
Son dy voym's agh un oor
Jeh dy heshaght villish nocht.

Ven-Aeg:

Few royd voish yn unniag,
Fow royd ta mee dy graa,
Son cha jean-ym lhiggey stiagh oo,
Ta fys aym's er ny shaare.

Dy bragh, ny dy bragh, guilley,
Cha bee aymys ayd son ben,
Son cha vell mee goll dy phoosey,
My taitnys hene vys aym.

Dooiney-Aeg:
Hug ee eisht yn filleag arree,
As haink ee sheesh my whaail,
Lesh phaagaghyn cha graihagh,
Myr shoh renshin meeiteil.

Va ny creeaghyn ain cha kenjal,
Lesh yn gerjagh va ain cooidjagh;
Nagh geayll shin rieu lheid roie,
As scoan my nee shin arragh.

Translated as follows:

Young Man:
Saying: My love, my comfort,
Now do thou let me in;
Could I but have one hour of
Thy company to-night?

Young Woman:
Get away from the window,
Get away, I tell thee;
For I will not let you in,
I know better than that.

No, never; no, never, young man,
Will I be thy woman;
For I'm not going to marry,
My own pleasure I will have.

Young Man:
Then she throw her shawl o'er her,
And came down to meet me
With kisses, oh, how loving!
This way we did meet.

Our hearts were so mellow with
 Our mutual pleasure;
 You never heard such before,
 And you scarce will again.

The historical songs include our old favourite "Thurot as Elliott" and the place of honour is occupied by "Fin as Oshin," that is "Fingal and Ossian," which carries us back almost to mythical times. It is curious that the only known written copy of this semi-historical piece should have lain buried amongst the treasures of the British Museum for more than one hundred years until discovered by the industry of Mr Moore. Had there in those early days been a Manx museum the M.S. might have found its rightful home and instead of lying so long forgotten it might have been possible to recover other portions of it. Now, alas, it is too late.

How delightful it is to turn over songs we were accustomed to sing in our youth and to find them in all their pristine beauty; songs we sang long years ago or which our mothers sang for us in rocking us to sleep. Here there are lots of them. The section of children's songs contains all the old favourites and is not the least interesting part of the book. "Ushag veg Ruy," "Juan y Jaggad Kear," "Red Top-knots," and others not less well known.

Among the songs of customs we have of course "Mylecharaine." We are glad that at last an authoritative transcript of the original of this song is before us, together with a faithful translation. It may now be hoped that there is an end to the foolish spellings and very extraordinary translations we have seen for many years past issued, we regret to say, by Manx as well as English ignoramuses while some supposed rhyming translations have, at times, been simple outrages upon common sense. Now that the thing is, once and for all, done properly, we hope those having occasion to sing or quote the words will use the version given in this book. "Hunt the Wren" and "Hop-tu-naa" are equally good. Among the fishermen the nautical ballads will be especially appreciated, particularly those on the "Loss of the herring boats," "Voyage of the Tiger," and "Arrane y Skeddan." It would occupy more space than is at our disposal to bring out each song specially worth notice because of the beauty and crispness of the translations or the explanatory notes freely inserted wherever necessary, but for a final example we must cite "Ny Kirree fo Niaghtey." We have carefully compared Mr Moore's version with some half-dozen others now before us and in no instance is more careful treatment displayed than in this song. It has a beauty as a pastoral ballad which may be easily obscured by thoughtless transcribers but here the rendering is all that can be desired.

We have left ourselves little room to deal with the musical pages of the work, but there need be no hesitation in saying the airs are as we have heard them sung, and know them to be. With the exception of obvious corruptions and interpolations we can observe there are, happily, no "improvements," and as we desire the old, and not

something new, we are glad that beyond giving the old, old songs in all their purity of tone Mr Moore and his co-adjustors have attempted nothing more. We are pleased to observe this is definitely stated in the introductory preface. Mr Moore informs us he has allowed no preconceptions as to what might have been intended to enter into the question, but has simply set down the airs as heard from the lips of the singers and that a "prettified English presentation" has been sternly avoided. That this part of the work has been performed by competent hands will be apparent by the mention of the names of Miss [8g] Wood and Mr Colin Brown, a good authority on Celtic music.

The Introductory Prefaces by the Editor, and by the Rev. T.E. Brown, M.A., whom we are glad again to welcome afford pleasing reading, and a great deal of valuable and interesting information concerning the historical evolution of the songs and music, information hitherto obtainable only in scattered books, combined also with such original research.

We must not close without a reference to the manner in which the book is produced by the publishers, the quality of paper and beauty and clearness of print, Messrs Johnson deserve warm thanks. The printing is carefully worked and enhances the credit the same firm earned for their share in the "Manx Note Book." The binding is such that those desirous of doing may have the book re-bound to individual taste. As if to add a crowning glory to a book already handsome in appearance, we have a number of very beautiful illustrations by Mr J.M. Nicholson. So pretty are they indeed, and so carefully reproduced that we are filled with a desire for more, and would have been glad had there been double the number. Mr Nicholson has also designed the strikingly handsome title page. Where all is good it is difficult to choose but for ourselves we place among the best the sketches of Mount Karran in Sulby Glen, the entrance to Peel Castle, and that to "Ny Kirree fo Niaghtey." All the tail-pieces, small though they be, are remarkably clear and effective. Upon examination of the book, we are confident readers will agree with us that to all concerned in its production, the very heartiest thanks are due. The book is reasonable in price, cheap even, and so we have the greater reason to commend it to all lovers of the old Manx Ballads and music and to hope it may have the circulation it deserves.

§4 ISLE OF MAN TIMES (23 FEBRUARY 1897)

[4c] With the New Year came the publication of another addition to Manx literature, namely, Mr A. W. Moore's collection of *Manx Ballads and Music*. This admirable little work is none the less welcome in view of the recent production of *Manx National Songs*, by some other Manxmen, and we cannot join in a regret which has been expressed for Mr A.W. Moore and the Deemster Gill and his collaborators did not join their forces and produce the results of their researches in one work. The scope of the collection gathered together and published under the

direction of the Deemster and his friends, is almost entirely confined to the dying-out melodies of Manxland, and the tunes are arranged in a popular and "singable" form, with words—not entirely on Manx subjects—to suit the airs; the object being to present Manx music to the present and future generations, in such a form that the tunes may once again be heard in our homes and in "places where they sing." That this object has been, to a considerable extent, attained, even in the short time the book has been before the public—a little over four months—is certain; and the compilers of *Manx National Songs* have reason to congratulate themselves, on the success of their efforts.

Very different is the idea with which Mr A.W. Moore has issued his work, but this later contribution is equally excellent in its own line, and will be as gratefully accepted by the Manx people. In Mr Moore's compilation we have presented to us some 70 of the Manx ballads, collected from various sources, some oral, and others written and printed, and a few of though old tunes to which some of those curious songs were sung by the old Manx people. There can be no doubt that the editor has done his native land an invaluable service, because the old people who have these traditionary ballads in their memory are fast leaving us; the manuscripts are liable to be lost or injured; and if the work of perpetuating these folk-songs had not been done in this decade, it would never have been done at all, and these interesting ballads and tunes would have sunk into oblivion and been entirely lost of posterity. Happily, we have among us men like Mr A.W. Moore. Manx to the heart's core, and loving everything pertaining to the old Manx as only a son of the soil can, and with means and ability to take in hand a national work of this kind and carry it to a successful issue. This, his most recent, addition to our Manx literature is, therefore, heartily welcomed by Manx people; and we hasten to add our thanks to the editor for the fresh obligation under which we feel ourselves, as Manxmen, placed.

The new book is printed in a very effective style, admirably decorated with vignettes, tail-pieces, initials, and sketches by Mr J.M. Nicholson, which add greatly to the appearance of the volume. The Rev. T.E. Brown contributes a prefatory notice which contains some very valuable opinions on the origin and nature of some of the ballads and tunes reproduced in the text. The editor, Mr A.W. Moore has written an introduction to the volume dealing at some length with the same subject and explaining where each of the quaint old ballads was obtained and what the significance is in each. Mr Moore acknowledges the invaluable aid which he has received from a number of Manx people in the obtaining of both ballads and music. The poetical merit of the Manx ballads is, as Mr Moore says in his introduction, of a very low order even in the original Manx, and as the translations which are printed parallel with the Manx are literal, the poems read very indifferently in English. Still they are not collected to be regarded as models for the young poets who will be sprouting with the spring-time; their claim to interest is in the tact that they are Manx, and the Manx people of this Island will, we feel sure, at once acknowledge the

justness or that claim, and the book will be read with pleasure in every Manx home. Then the tunes which are given, though few in number, are arranged and harmonised in a simple but effective manner by Miss M.L. Wood, A.C.O., and Miss McKnight, F.C.O., and—in the case of “Mylecharaine,” in the minor—Mr J.B. Nicholson; and their work has been submitted to Mr Colin Brown, the great authority on Celtic music. The editor of the work says: “I can state with confidence that a ‘prettified, Englishmen, presentation’ of these old melodies has been carefully avoided, and that every effort has been made to preserve them with all their, strange, outlandish and unconventional qualities.” In this endeavour Mr Moore has succeeded very well, and the result is that while his versions of the Manx tunes are not very likely to be heard on the concert platform, they will be with us as a true and reliable record of the original airs which were sung in the cottage homes of our Manx forefathers.

[* Manx Ballads and Music: Edited by A.W. Moore. M.A.. Printed and published by G. & R. Johnson, Prospect-hill. Douglas, Isle of Man, 1896.]

§5 MONA’S HERALD (24 MARCH 1897)

[4e] If any living Manxman deserves the best thanks of his fellow countrymen that gentleman, in our opinion, is Mr A.W. Moore, the editor of the handsomely got up value which lies before us, which we have just read, and which it is now our pleasure and privilege to bring under the notice of our readers. Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century the history, the literature, and the poetry of the “Little Manx Nation” may be described as a minus quantity. We had no historian to chronicle the passing events, or to describe the habits, manners, and customs of “our rude forefathers.” We had no antiquarian to deliver into the recesses of a buried past and to rescue from oblivion what the historian had failed to put on record. Neither had we a race of bards to compose, sing, and pass on to posterity, war, love, and sea songs as some other Celtic nations had. We grant that we have had occasional glimpses, more or less accurate, of the habits and customs of our forefathers during the last four centuries, but if we go beyond that period we are landed in the clouds of mist and obscurity. Surrounding nations can go back almost to the beginning of the Christian era and trace their history through the centuries with at least tolerable certainty. But to us, in a measure, the past is a sealed book. What would we now not give for just one A.W. Moore in each century from the time of Julius Cesar up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, Mr Moore’s prolific pen had already given us the “Diocesan History,” the “Folk-lore,” the “Climate,” the “Surnames and Placenames” and other literature relating to our Island home, and his latest work, “Manx Ballads and Music,” is characterised by the same painstaking research and careful compilation which are so much in evidence in his earlier productions.

We can heartily recommend Manx Ballads to three classes of our readers—(1) All three Manxmen and lovers of the Island, whether at home or abroad; (2) The

Antiquarian, be he English, Irish, Scotch, or Welsh; (3) The [4d] speculator in books, who buys to sell again at an enhanced price.

All patriotic Manxmen will be pleased to receive this memorial of the past. In this volume he will find many of the songs he sang in his youth in all their pristine beauty; the songs which he sang on special occasions, "Hop-tu-naa" and "Hunt the Wren" are here recorded; and the songs which his mother sang as she rocked him to sleep in his little cot have not been omitted. Non-Manxmen may ridicule the words and the music, but to him they are dear and are more treasured in his memory than most of the latter day songs.

The antiquarian does not require to be told to purchase a copy, so we will pass on to the speculator in books, and give him a few words of advice. The general "get-up" of this book is charming. The printing, by G. & R. Johnson, is all that can be desired. Those who are acquainted with the "Manx Note Book," know well the style of work turned out by this firm. When we say that the illustrations are by Mr J.M. Nicholson, and are executed in his best style, we have fully described the book from an artistic point of view. The title page, vignettes, tail-pieces, initials, and sketches are all little gems of art. We are informed that all the blocks have been destroyed, and as the number of copies of the book is strictly limited, the value of the book is bound to rise in the course of a few years.

To the general public the subject matter of the book will be found disappointing. The Rev. T.E. Brown in a very valuable "Preface," says—"The next thing which strikes us in the survey of our little field is that the songs are so few in number, and, in quality, so trifling, so unromantic, so unpoetical, and so modern. The causes may be conjectured." Mr Brown then gives in detail seven causes to account for this state of things. We agree with him in all his conjectures. But as the causes have now happily been removed, we look forward to the time when we will have Manx Ballads and Music of a truly national character, and of a high order of merit. We do not agree with those who say that the Manx are an unmusical race. Facts prove the contrary. Our school children can sing equally as well if not superior to those on the mainland. Those who attended the Children's Operetta, lately given in the Grand Theatre, will bear us out in this statement. We have on the Island at present quite a number of talented musicians, many of whom are Manx to the backbone.

If the subject matter be disappointing it does not in any way detract from the laudable object Mr Moore had in view. In his introduction he says: "The object of this publication is to collect in one volume a curious literature, the greater part of which was threatened with almost certain loss." He, together with his coadjutors, have carried out this object in a manner creditable to all concerned.

Coming to the ballads we find there are over seventy distinctly Manx pieces. These are divided under the following headings: (1) Mythical, Semi-historical, and Historical Ballads; (2) Children's Songs; (3) Ballads connected with customs and superstitions; (4) Love Songs; (5) Patriotic Ballads; (6) Nautical Ballads; (7)

Miscellaneous Ballads. On one page we have the original Manx and on the opposite page a translation into literal English prose. Mr Moore acknowledges the assistance he has had from Mr W.J. Cain in this part of the work. We are pleased to find that Mr Moore has given us the ballads in all their primitive simplicity. He has not given us the ballads plus Moore by working in something of his own creation. The method adopted will afford assistance to the student of the Manx language, while the other method would have been of no use to anyone. In conclusion, we advise those interested in all things which appertain to Manxland to procure a copy of this book without delay.

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STEPHEN MILLER, 2017

